



CITY OF NOME

Celebrating 100 Years of Gold Rush History

Incorporated April 9, 1901

Via email <bill_woolf@murkowski.senate.gov>

April 14, 2003

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator
522 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

Subject: Alaska Transportation Issues

The City of Nome is pleased to provide you with our concerns facing Alaska transportation issues. The City firmly believes that transportation and its support systems are the foundation for economic development. The transportation systems must be efficient, cost-effective and environmentally sound. The needed transportation infrastructure for this region must be dual purpose in that it must support import of finished goods and export of resources (finished and raw). We hope federal legislation will adequately address within-region and outside-region transportation issues, including a component that links to the Russian Far East.

On behalf of the City of Nome I respectfully submit the following comments for consideration. For Nome and the Seward Peninsula airports and ports provide the major transportation system for the short-term. Roads and railroads provide potential systems in the longer-term analysis. Expounding upon this premise leads one to identify these issues.

It is probably safe to say that, for day-to-day travel and many consumer needs, airplanes provide the number one means for transportation in this region. **Airports** and their support facilities need to be analyzed for freight growth, both in physical size and weights, the types of products that are now flown into a community and the types of aircraft serving individual airports. In Nome one must look at the current jet fleet (737-200's) and how the jet fleet will change over time. In this age of global transport, an analysis of the potential for global transport and the types of aircraft that will support this transport and how communities may participate in this transport must be reviewed. There is much to be gained by investigating the transportation models developed by commercial businesses (FedEx, UPS, etc.) and the applicability of these models to this region.

Air traffic to smaller communities has changed dramatically in the past 10 years. We are now seeing vehicles and fuel being flown into communities that have poor water-born transportation systems. The number of passengers, growing in some proportion with population, will continue to increase. We have seen the air transport of daily staples become a common occurrence. Facilities need to evolve over the legislative timeframe.

Ports & Harbors support the means to economically move bulk items such as fuel, building materials, coal, gravel, and minerals/concentrates. Ports & harbors can foster economic development associated with fishing, tourism and subsistence activities. These facilities need to be funded with the idea of developing the infrastructure to support local communities on a scale that fits the community needs.

The expansion of the Nome port & harbor will create transportation opportunities that do not exist today and these should be identified and investigated as part of the legislation. The potential for future growth in the aggregate and rock export from the Seward Peninsula is real and the necessary infrastructure needed to support this commodity should be identified.

Surface transportation systems to and between villages should include not only roads but also permanent winter trails. These systems need to be sensitive to individual community desires.

Winter trails, providing a significant network during particularly harsh periods of the year, are of vital interest to communities both on a social and commercial level. To-date the State has had some success with developing a permanent trail system. Additional work in this area is merited.

Roads between villages may well provide economical benefits to communities and the State. Roads within villages are vital to support sanitation infrastructure (water, wastewater, and solid waste disposal) and must continue to be developed at appropriate levels.

The existing road system to mining districts on the Seward Peninsula should be expanded to facilitate economical development of available resources. Roads need to be planned and built so as to minimize long-term operation and maintenance costs. In particular, we have seen high O&M costs associated with drifted snow and seasonal run-off. Legislation should allow for appropriate design and construction standards to mitigate this environmental factor. It is important that federal funds be used to serve access to federal lands.

Finally, road projects that enhance community development, such as 'streetscape' enhancements, tourist vistas, camping sites developed as part of a road project and paving of critical local roads, should be identified and investigated as part of this plan.

Transportation corridors linking NW Alaska with other parts of the state need to be established or identified. The corridors should be of such a nature so as to allow movement of natural resources such as natural gas or localized finds of oil through pipelines. The corridors should support the potential development of a railroad from existing and potential mineral deposits to tidewater. The corridors should accommodate utility needs for power transmission. The sources of power include conventional diesel electric but potential geothermal sources on the Seward Peninsula.

We look forward to working with the Congressional delegation and our regional partners on the development of this very important legislation. Please contact me by telephone at 443-6601 or by email, manager@ci.nome.ak.us , to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,
CITY OF NOME

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randy Romenesko', written over a horizontal line.

Randy Romenesko, P.E.
City Manager

Cc: Mayor & Council
Nome Planning Commission
Nome Port Commission
Nome Joint Utility System